


BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

For Fiscal Year 2022

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Farmers Independent Telephone Company dba Grantsburg Telcom 139 West Madison Avenue Grantsburg, WI 54840	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions. Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: March 17, 2022 at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. Late applications will not be accepted.		
	Contact for further information: PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov		
	Date: December 1, 2021		
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>			
<p>Applicant Certification: In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>			
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print) Terry Kucera	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Title General Manager </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Phone () 715-463-5322 </td> </tr> </table>	Title General Manager	Phone () 715-463-5322
Title General Manager	Phone () 715-463-5322		
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date 3/17/22		

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name Farmers Independent Telephone Company	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar) \$130,099 (45%)
Federal Employer Identification No. 39-0273273	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar) \$159,011 (55%)
Contact Name and Title Terry Kucera General Manager	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar) \$289,110
Telephone Number 715-463-5322	Project Name Town of Union - Clam Flowage Phase II
E-mail Address(es) terry@grantsburgtelcom.com	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.) FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other) Last Mile
Grant Manager Contact Name	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations Burnett County Development Association County Government Center 7410 County Road K #120 Siren, WI 54872 715-349-2979 Nate Ehalt Burnett County Administrator	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) Farmers Independent Telephone will construct FTTH to 100 locations in the rural Clam Flowage area of Burnett County Wisconsin. This FTTH infrastructure will connect to Farmers' existing network, with complete redundancy and reliability.	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed 1000 Mbps	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed 1000 Mbps
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 100 Mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 25 Mbps
County or Counties served by this project Burnett	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Union – Clam Flowage Phase II

List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve Centurylink/Lumen	
Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in <u>Section 1.4</u> of the application instruction? (yes/no) Yes	Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no) Not at this time
For last mile projects or component the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). 0	For last mile projects or components the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). 100
Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i> ? 0	Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i> ? 4
For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) YES	Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no) YES
Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no) YES	Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) No
Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2021? (yes/no) YES	

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

Grant Summary

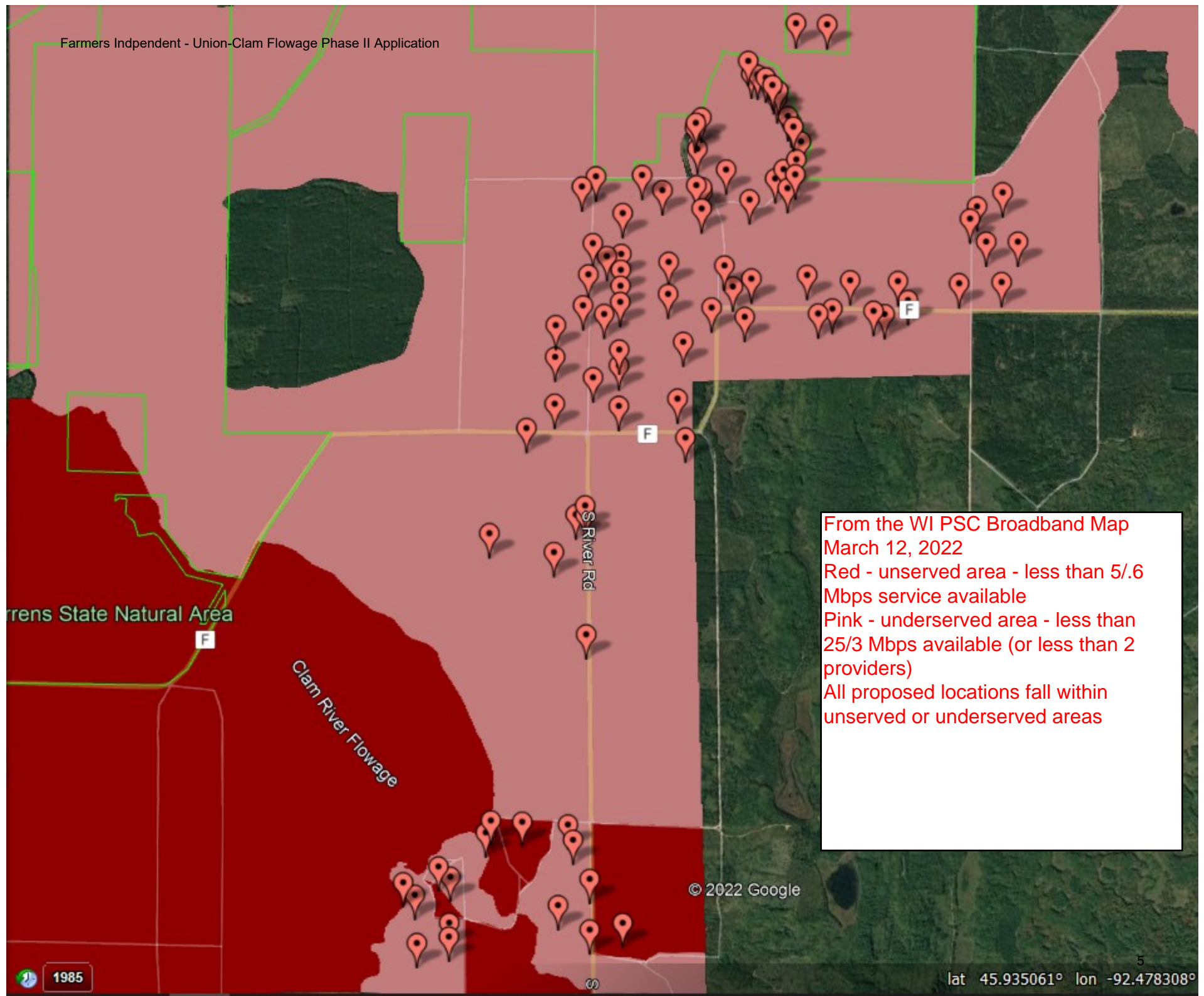
Grant Applicant:	Project:
Farmers Independent Telephone Co. d/b/a Grantsburg Telcom	Union - Clam River

Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 84,290.00	\$ 103,021.00	\$ 187,311.00
2	Equipment	\$ 37,439.50	\$ 45,760.50	\$ 83,200.00
3	Supplies	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 8,370.00	\$ 10,229.00	\$ 18,599.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
6	Travel	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
7	Other	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total:		\$ 130,099.50	\$ 159,010.50	\$ 289,110.00
				55.0% match requested

Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Burnett County	Partner	Cash	\$ 5,000.00
2	Farmers Independent Telephone Co.	Applicant	Cash	\$ 154,010.50
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 159,010.50



From the WI PSC Broadband Map
March 12, 2022
Red - unserved area - less than 5/6
Mbps service available
Pink - underserved area - less than
25/3 Mbps available (or less than 2
providers)
All proposed locations fall within
unserved or underserved areas

3.2 Mandatory application requirements

An applicant must include the following information in its application to be eligible for this grant and the application must demonstrate satisfaction of indicated requirements.

3.2.1 Applicant identification and contact information

- a. The name and address of the entity applying for the grant, and the mailing address, telephone number and e-mail address of one or more contact persons representing the applicant.

Farmers Independent Telephone Company
dba Grantsburg Telcom
139 West Madison Avenue
Grantsburg, WI 54840
terry@grantsburgtelcom.com

- b. If the application proposes a public-private partnership, the identity and contact information for all application partners.

Burnett County Development Association
County Government Center
7410 County Road K #120
Siren, WI 54872

- c. The application must show that the applicant is an organization, a telecommunications utility, or a city, village, town, or county that has established a legal partnership or joint venture arrangement with an otherwise qualified organization or telecommunications utility, and as such meets the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504(1).

Farmers Independent Telephone Company (FITC) is an established telecommunications company in the State of Wisconsin. FITC contacted the Burnett County to establish a partnership to build high-speed broadband in rural Burnett County. The county has agreed to supply \$5,000 in funding for this partnership.

See Attachment A for the Public – Private Partnership Agreement

3.2.2 Description of the project

Farmers Independent Telephone Company (FITC) is submitting this application for a FTTH project serving the rural area of the Clam Flowage in Burnett County, Wisconsin. This project is an extension of the Clam River – Phase I ARPA grant that was awarded to FITC. The project will be an extension of FITC’s existing fiber network, with dedicated backbone, distribution, feeder and drop fiber to the premises to these locations. The FTTH infrastructure will deliver high-speed broadband with gig capable speeds, along with voice services that meet all quality standards. The broadband connections will have the speed and latency standards for streaming video, telephone services, telemedicine appointments and monitoring, telework capabilities, and on-line education connections. The plant will be 100% buried cable utilizing state-of-the-art pedestals and street right-of-way. This project will mirror the FTTH deployment that FITC has used in its previous mainline fiber construction over the past 11 years.

- a. A static map and description of the area of the State that will be affected by the proposed project.

A kmz map file was sent to pscbroadbandtea@wisconsin.gov before the application deadline. PDF version attached on Page 4 of the application.

- b. If the project area lies within a census block designated as served on the PSC Broadband Map, provide additional documentation to demonstrate the actual broadband service that is available in the proposed project area.

All locations within the proposed area are unserved or underserved per the PSC Broadband Map

- c. An explanation of how the proposed project will increase broadband access.

Today, these locations are built with copper DSL cable capable of less than the 25/3 Mbps, or by only one provider with no fiber optic infrastructure. Fiber facilities will immediately offer the capability of higher speeds for internet access. The expansion of the FTTH service to these unserved and underserved locations will provide the subscribers a high quality and reliable communications infrastructure to expand their educational, economic, and healthcare opportunities. The locations passed will be able to access speeds up to 1 Gbps upload and 1 Gbps download. Completion of this project will offer a viable teleworking experience for any consumer who utilizes this option. The overall quality of life for these residents will

improve by giving them access to web-based education, telemedicine, business, commerce, and the agricultural industry.

Include information about the:

- Potential and expected number of households served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.

Overall, the project will pass 100 residential locations, all of which are unserved or underserved. These are family homes, so it will impact many individual lives in a positive way.

- Potential and expected number of businesses served, including number of unserved and underserved locations.

There are no brick-and-mortar businesses in this area as it is rural. There is a potential for home-based businesses, given the high-speed internet option proposed by this project.

- Expected number of seasonal residents and tourists served.

All locations in the proposed project area are year-round homes.

- Estimated download and upload speed of the broadband service packages available for purchase.

The initial service options available to residential & business customers will be expanded over time to meet demand & market pricing. Current Offerings include:

25 Mbps - \$69.95
50 Mbps - \$89.95
75 Mbps - \$109.95
100 Mbps - \$159.95
150 Mbps - \$199.95
175 Mbps - \$249.95
250 Mbps - \$299.95
1 Gbps – Request Pricing

- d. A statement whether the proposed project is targeting the “last mile,” “middle mile,” or backbone portion of the broadband infrastructure.

This project will target Last Mile infrastructure for the area and locations contained in the application. The proposed project is an extension of FITC’s existing redundant GPON-designed fiber network that already serves

villages, towns, and unincorporated areas in Burnett and Polk counties. No middle mile costs are included in this application.

- e. A description of the broadband service to be provided, including estimated download and upload speeds, whether the speed is based on dedicated or shared bandwidth, and the technology that will be used. This description may be illustrated by a map or schematic diagram, as appropriate.

FITC submits this grant application for Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) broadband expansion in the Town of Union and rural Clam River area. The proposed project will initially benefit 100 locations in unserved/underserved area in Burnett County, WI.

The technology used for this project is FTTH, provisioned via a buried fiber network and using Calix GPON fiber for loop plant to deliver the scalable technology forward high-speed broadband product. Calix Optical Network Terminal (ONT) and routers capable of providing 1 Gbps of symmetrical service will be placed at the customer premise. All electronic systems serving more than one customer are deployed in an active/standby configuration and FITC maintains spare inventory for key components. FITC will support the proposed service area with the same technology, with the intent of providing the same experience to the proposed service areas as are currently being delivered to the rest of our customers.

This application is an extension of the previously awarded ARPA grant which covered phase 1 of the Clam River area. This will extend that infrastructure to reach more locations, more families, and more business opportunities.

- f. For middle mile projects:

Not Applicable

- g. A schedule by which the applicant intends to complete the components of the proposed project. The project period is up to 24 months.

May 2022 – Order Equipment

July/August 2022 – Begin Construction – main line, distribution, and feeder fiber

October 2022 – begin installation of electronics at subscriber locations

2022-2023 – begin turn up of fiber-based customer services

3.2.3 Itemized Budget

- a. In addition to the Summary of Project Budget that is included as page 3, applicants should include a price list or quote for any equipment the applicant intends to purchase, including capital expenditures.

All equipment purchased and used for construction will be owned by Farmers Independent Telephone Company. The Project Budget on page 3 of this application gives detail on the equipment this is to be purchased and the expenditures for this project.

Farmers Independent Telephone Company			
Union - Clam Flowage Phase II			
	Quantity	Price	Total
Contractual			
Fiber Construction	23,564	ft \$2.30	\$54,197.00
Boring	3,836	ft \$11.50	\$44,114.00
Fiber Drop	100	ft \$890.00	\$89,000.00
Equipment			
GPON OLT	1	\$18,500.00	\$18,500.00
ONTs	100	\$255.00	\$25,500.00
Cable	27,400	ft \$0.69	\$18,906.00
Pedestals	40	\$507.31	\$20,292.00
Labor			
Equipment Install	30	\$120.00	\$3,600.00
ONT Install	100	\$150.00	\$15,000.00
TOTAL			\$289,109.00

- b. The application must show that the grant, if awarded, will not subsidize the expenses of a telecommunications provider or the monthly bills of telecommunications customers.

The total dollar amount of the project is listed and accounted for in the equipment list. No grant money will be used to subsidize the on-going expenses of FITC, nor will it be used to subsidize the end user monthly billing amounts.

- c. The application must show that the grant funds requested will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the underserved areas covered by the application.

FITC agrees to demonstrate that all grant funds requested in the application will be used for the sole purpose of constructing broadband infrastructure in the unserved and underserved areas described in this application. The money will be used for aid to construction costs. FITC will self-fund its contribution to the Project's construction and equipment costs. All expenses incurred will be within the Award's Performance Period.

3.2.4 Priority factors supporting the application

- a. **Matching funds.** A description of the matching funds the applicant will invest in the proposed project, if any. For each element, indicate the type of match (cash, salary expense, or in-kind contribution). If the application is submitted by a partnership, identify the partner responsible for providing each element of the proposed matching funds. *Note: The requirement for this information is satisfied via inclusion of the completed Funding Statement as page 4 of the application.*

FITC will self-fund its portion of the application to engineer and install the mainline fiber, electronics, fiber drops, installation, and splicing in the proposed area. Burnett County Development Association has committed to a partnership in which they will commit \$5,000 to the project pending grant approval.

See Page 4 of this application for the Budget Summary and Attachment A for the commitment letter.

- If available, provide documentation to support an offer of matching funds (minutes of a town board meeting, a letter from a prospective customer or local government official, etc.).

See Attachment A – Public-Private Partnership Agreement Letter from Burnett County Development Association

- **Public-private partnerships.** If the public-private partnership is memorialized in a joint venture agreement or other writing, provide a copy of that agreement.

See Attachment A – Public-Private Partnership Agreement Letter from Burnett County Development Association

FITC is committed to our communities and is eager to join into this partnership with the county development association. Joining forces will assist in the deployment of the fiber network infrastructure and will be a great tool for marketing the service once it is built. Private – Public partnerships solidify our commitment to the customers in this area, they solidify the counties commitment to citizens, and it supports the local economy and the overall development of our rural communities.

- b. **Existing broadband service.** A list of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve.

Centurylink/Lumen – 15/.768 Mbps, 40/3 Mbps

This project will not be duplicating any existing high-speed broadband infrastructure. Lumen has ADSL or VDSL service reported in the

underserved areas. Based on Form 477 data, there could be errors in reporting based on geographics and lack of granularity. Based on the company's knowledge of the area and communications with area homeowners, its proposed broadband infrastructure would not duplicate any existing FTTH infrastructure. Lumen's reporting of 40/3 Mbps is reported by census block, and in reality, these speeds are only achievable if the locations are close enough to terminals in the field.

There is no fiber in any of the proposed area, whether it is unserved or underserved. All locations listed in this grant application are unserved or underserved via the Wisconsin Broadband Map.

- Provide a list of mobile wireless service providers that overlap the footprint of the proposed project.

AT&T Mobility – Form 477 no speeds available

T-Mobile – Form 477 no speeds available

Verizon Wireless – Form 477 no speeds available

- C. **Project impact.** A description of the geographic area and the population, both in terms of absolute numbers and likely users, which will be served by the proposed project. Indicate the number of anticipated residential and business customers in the project area, if known. Explain the speed and quality of internet service that will be available. Include information about the range of packages available for purchase. Provide details on any low-income access programs and steps the project will take to support adoption.

In the project area, there are 100 households, no brick-and-mortar businesses. Based on the information from the U.S. Census (July 2021 update) there are 2.07 persons per household in Burnett County, Wisconsin. That equates to an approximate population of 207 people that will reap the benefits of high-speed broadband connections.

FITC will construct FTTH infrastructure, provisioned via a buried fiber network. The entire network will be redundant and therefore reliable. FITC will offer speed packages ranging from an affordable 25/3 Mbps tier up to a 1 Gbps symmetrical tier. This will ensure that customers bandwidth needs are met. By including a diversity of tiers, we safeguard the affordability of service for every household in the proposed area. FITC is a participant in the Federal Lifeline Program and the new Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which offers a \$30 discount per month per household for low-income qualified households. We will offer the ACP program to these locations if awarded the grant. Each household will be given the information upon completion of the project which includes instructions on how to sign up and qualify for the credit. FITC will continue community

outreach of this program ensuring that its availability is known and we are there to assist any subscriber who may need the assistance.

Residents will benefit from the project as it will allow more people to work from home, enhance access to medical and public safety facilities, increase access to educational opportunities, and encourage virtual health care prospects.

- d. **Scalability**. A description of how the proposed project could expand or improve the broadband service it delivers, while maintaining the quality of its broadband service. This description should include specific projected increases in the following parameters that are known at the time of the application:

The demand for bandwidth seems without limit. Service providers who invest in reliable and proven fiber network infrastructure can have confidence that the installed infrastructure is scalable to the bandwidth needs of today and the future. Providers and consumers can rely on a high quality of service over the lifetime of the investment.

The ultimate in scalable bandwidth delivery to the consumer is a Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) network. A FTTH network connects the network exchange and the home using a fiber optic link. The bandwidth of a FTTH network is not limited by the fiber connection, but by the transmission equipment on the link. Operators can upgrade their respective FTTH networks simply by replacing the equipment at the terminals of the fiber lines. Fiber has a long usable life. With that in mind, the FTTH architecture saves time and money, as the plant does not need to be replaced for many decades. Consumer speeds can be upgraded simply by replacing transmission equipment. After decades of use, any fiber that needs replacing is also easily and affordably swapped by blowing new fiber through any conduit that was placed with the original fiber.

FITC will be constructing a FTTH network to the locations listed in this application if grant money is awarded. GPON is a point to multipoint technology that connects an Optical Line Terminal (OLT) to many Optical Network Terminals (ONTs). GPON networks utilize passive splitters between the OLT and the ONT, and it allows for flexibility in designing the network for ultimate scalability and function. The fiber GPON infrastructure allows for higher bandwidth and consistent reliability over counterpart technologies like wireless or satellite. GPON assures Quality of Service (QoS) by guaranteeing necessary bandwidth for each service and each user. QoS features are used to ensure proper service prioritization and delivery. All information that travels the optical network is encrypted, which gives the consumer an additional level of security.

The entire FTTH network is redundant, giving the company and consumer confidence that they will stay connected at all times. FITC can quickly expand the existing equipment to meet an increase in customers by adding additional shelves and cards. The network design and fiber counts used in the proposal can easily be scaled to accommodate additional locations if the need arises. We can expand from the 100 locations to many more by simply adding additional equipment. FITC can add additional locations to the network if demand suggests the need.

FITC will offer high-speed internet to these locations as well as voice service to any location that is interested in those services.

The next generation offers symmetrical 10 Gig service over the same fiber. FITC can easily evolve utilizing the same infrastructure to reach these much higher speeds. This is an ultimate example in scalability and investment stability.

- **Economic development.** A description of how the proposed project will promote job growth or retention, expand the property tax base or improve the overall economic vitality of the municipality or region.

The proposed project is likely to have a local and regional economic impact since broadband speeds will increase to levels that can readily accommodate individuals and businesses seeking to access services and projects available today via the Internet. The proposed project will increase the ability for customers to work from home, increase educational options, allow businesses greater access to on-line opportunities, increase medical access options for both patients and providers, including savings utilizing virtual health care technologies, and increase access to government programs and services.

FTTH service also increases the value of homes, improving the real estate market. Homes will increase in monetary value, in addition, having fast and reliable broadband service available will attract many potential buyers who may otherwise choose to live in a different area due to their reliance on broadband connectivity.

FITC believes that sustainable broadband adoption will transform this underserved area into a highly productive rural community. The demand is present today for advanced technology and high-speed broadband. FTTH will empower the area by providing the opportunity to be proficient users of broadband technology. This use and development of broadband will

provide various home-based business options, stimulate economic growth, and encourage innovation and investment. Due to the rural nature of the proposed area, providing fiber optic based broadband service will allow local farmers to incorporate and benefit from the latest agri-business technologies. These technologies would include precision agriculture which seeks to use new technologies to increase crop yields and profitability while lowering the levels of traditional inputs needed to grow crops. If funding is awarded, FITC will look at expanding broadband buildouts into additional adjoining underserved areas to extend the benefits of a fiber-based network serviced by a local provider that gives back to the communities it serves.

- e. **Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas.** A description of whether the proposed project will or will not impair the ability of a broadband service provider or competing broadband service provider to extend broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area.

This project will not impair broadband service to areas adjacent to the proposed project area. FITC has fiber facilities that already exist adjacent to the proposed area. The proposed build-out would extend the current FITC service area and provide broadband speeds that far exceed the services that are currently available to the population in the proposed area.

There is no history or suggestion that incumbent facilities in or serving the proposed project area would, as a result, incur higher than average costs per existing or forecasted subscriber. In fact, the absence of incumbent broadband service reported by subscribers in the application area suggests no facility investment has been a consideration by the incumbent.

3.2.5 Other information supporting the application

- a. A description of applicant's history or experience constructing broadband communications facilities in the State and elsewhere.

FITC is based in Grantsburg, Wisconsin (population 1,384) and has been an integral part of the community, providing advanced telecommunications services to households and businesses in its serving territory since 1907. As a local company and local community supporter, FITC is invested in the area, not only by deploying advanced broadband services, but monetarily to support the communities we serve.

FITC has donated more than a half million dollars to local not for profit organizations over the past 35 years, including the local hospital, the local library, the local school district, and the local fire department. The Board of

Directors sees the expansion of its broadband network as an opportunity to provide additional donations to help spur local economic development in the project area and bridge the digital divide in our communities.

FITC is an incumbent local exchange carrier, providing voice, Internet, and TV service throughout our service territory. Currently, FITC serves approximately 1,700 voice customers, and 2,800 Internet customers.

FITC is submitting this application for a project serving the rural area of Union/Clam River. The project will build fiber as an extension of FITC's existing fiber network, with dedicated backbone, distribution, feeder, and drop fiber to premises in this area. Using these new facilities FITC will enhance services to this rural area. As a result of this project, FITC will be able to provide Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) broadband to 100 households Burnett County Wisconsin. The project will also provide a pathway to serve more homes in this area in the future.

The expansion of the FTTH broadband service to this unserved and underserved area will provide subscribers a high quality and reliable communications infrastructure to expand their educational, economic, and healthcare opportunities. The locations passed will be able to access speeds up to 1 Gbps download / 1 Gbps upload.

Completion of this project will offer a viable teleworking experience for any consumer who utilizes this prevalent option. The overall quality of life for these residents will improve with the high-speed offerings, giving them access to web-based education, telemedicine, business commerce, and agricultural industry.

FITC has been building fiber infrastructure for many years inside and outside of our study area boundary. Inside our study area, we have built fiber as it has been affordable, with only a few areas left to build. We have done this through our own funding or with ACAM support in some areas. FITC has a proven track record for successful deployment of Gigabit broadband service provisioned over fiber facilities. Our success is directly linked to the financial, technical, and professional expertise from employees at all levels. It is the experienced staff that has aided in the successful deployment of the existing broadband network and the recently completed CARES broadband deployment project in Spirit Lake, WI. FITC has also been awarded 2022 ARPA Grants for Clam River – Phase I, the Town of Sterling, WI, and the Town of Anderson, WI.

- b. A description of how the proposed project will or will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure.

There are no fixed wireless entities providing reliable and consistent 25/3 Mbps broadband service in the project area. There is one wireline that reports covering a partial portion of the proposed area with DSL, therefore no duplication of existing broadband service will occur. The locations in this application do not currently have FTTH infrastructure. The existing copper plant, nor any future network model that includes fiber-to-the-pedestal or fiber-to-the-node would provide adequate broadband speeds as these models continue to use outdated copper for the last mile connection to customer premise.

- c. A description of an applicant's financial ability to undertake the proposed broadband construction project.

FITC is a well-established company doing business in the State of Wisconsin. FITC is in good standing and has been in business for over 115 years as a privately owned and operated business. FITC is financially stable and will be financing our portion of the proposed project through cash on hand and in-house labor.

- d. For middle mile projects, state the terms under which the applicant will make its middle mile fiber resource available to last mile providers.

Not Applicable

- e. For middle mile routes, state the amount of fiber capacity, by number of fiber strands in a cable, that the applicant has been reserved for public use.

Not Applicable

- f. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.

All customers in this area that request broadband service from FITC will have more than adequate broadband speed available to access health care facilities from their home. The service will assist in reducing health care costs for transportation to medical facilities, office visit charges, and will provide faster response times. The bandwidth available is more than sufficient for on-line video visits, on-line monitoring, chart checks, and access to medical facilities across the globe.

Aging adults or those with disabilities will benefit from a FTTH build-out in this underserved area of Burnett County. Fiber broadband connections in residential homes, aging adults or individuals with disabilities may remain

in homes longer and delay or avoid institutionalized living. The capabilities and benefits of health and safety monitoring devices on a 100% fiber broadband network allow aging adults and those with disabilities the ability to remain independent and confident knowing they are safe at home. Older adults will maximize their independence at a much lesser cost than institutionalized living. Furthermore, professional and family caregivers have peace of mind knowing they can check in with patients and family members as much as necessary using remote smart devices that can monitor the activity inside and outside a home or business using internet-connected cameras, lights, and motion sensors.

- g. A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.

The global pandemic shook up our daily lives in a profound fashion. School systems at every level were forced to facilitate on-line education to all students and teachers. Some of these students did not and continue to not have connections to broadband services that are capable of video conferencing, research needs, or overall internet connections needed to complete homework assignments. The government assisted with financial programs to help families get and stay connected during the COVID pandemic. As more of these programs are coming to an end, grants are becoming available to fix the digital divide for infrastructure that is just not available in rural high-cost areas. Broadband makes it possible for elementary, middle, high school, and college students to complete homework assignments and access advanced topics and complete college courses. Access to online classes increases opportunities for K-12 students and college students while providing professional development and career advancement opportunities.

- h. A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:

Burnett County is not certified as a Broadband Forward! or Telecommuter Forward! community. FITC will encourage them to investigate the program and assist in any way to get certified.

- i. Letters and messages in support of the application submitted by prospective customers, local government officials, and other interested persons.

SEE ATTACHMENT B – Support Letter WSTA, Support Letter Senator Rob Stafsholt

- j. Any other equitable factor that the applicant desires to discuss, including one or more of the factors in Wis. Stat. § 196.03(6) that the applicant believes its project would advance. In discussing this element, the following information may be useful:

- Technical support and training materials that the applicant intends to provide.

FITC employs skilled technicians and customer service specialists who provide support either by phone or onsite depending on the nature of the issue. Each interested customer will receive a new customer packet which explains our service offerings, prices, equipment, and programs available to assist in their broadband experience, education, and financial assistance. Our goal is to resolve any trouble call with the first call or visit.

- Information that the applicant intends to use to promote better broadband adoption and use.

We will market our services to this area upon completion of the grant project, including our customer welcome packet, a description of services, and a link to our website which lists all services, programs and assistance that is available to this area. Our customer service staff, technicians, and managers will be available to answer questions, assist with set up, and digital literacy if needed.

- A description of a program or outreach to provide assistance to individuals of low income.

Complete information on the Universal Service Fund Lifeline Assistance program offered is available on its website, on our website, in our marketing materials, and each office staff member is well versed in answering questions and assisting with applications for qualification approval. FITC is also a participant in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which allows for a \$30 monthly broadband credit to qualified households. This program will be offered in this area as well. We will include links to the website, application site, and information page on our company's website. Our staff is also available to answer any questions, educate customers, and assist with the application process.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Private-Public Partnership and Support Letter

Attachment B – Letters of Support for Grant Application



ATTACHMENT A
OFFICE OF THE
Burnett County Development
Association
County Government Center
7410 County Road K, #120
Siren, WI 54872

Richard Hartmann
Economic
Development Director

Phone: 715-349-2979
Cell 715-566-0021

March 1, 2022

Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
North Towner, Sixth Floor
Hills Farm State Office Building
4822 North Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53706

RE: Letter of Support for a Broadband Expansion Grant: Farmers Independent Telephone Company – 139 W. Madison Avenue – Grantsburg, WI 54840

To Whom It May Concern:

The Burnett County Administrator along with the County Economic Development Director and fiduciary for the Burnett County Development Association (a non-profit development organization that assists in creating economic opportunities for residents, businesses and communities within the county), have as a high priority, the establishment and expansion of high speed broadband services for all county residents. They fully support Farmers Independent Telephone Company efforts in submitting a Wisconsin Public Service Commission Broadband Expansion Grant application for the benefit of portions of Burnett County in Union Township.

The Town of Union is in dire need of adequate, reliable, secure, and fairly priced fiber optic broadband service. Their current providers are not able to provide service to all members of the Town and those who have service are in need of adequate speeds and more reliable service.

Accessible, reliable, high speed, secure broadband is critical to support multiple facets within the Township. This has never been more critically important than now with the advent of the covid-19 pandemic. Our businesses need readily accessible high speed, reliable and secure internet service in order to operate, expand and remain competitive. Our schools require that their students need a reliable connection with fast down and up load speeds to attain the required knowledge and skills to complete their educational requirements. Medical and health care providers in Burnett County would be able to allow for more efficient communication and treatment of their patients, especially for critical care needs. This is particularly true in our rural unserved and underserved areas such as Union Township and again, now even more so due to the covid-19 virus.

Another important aspect for expanding and improving broadband here is the increased demand from teleworkers for high speed, reliable, secure and competitively priced internet that is easily accessed. Burnett County, borders the State of Minnesota and is in close proximity to the Twin Cities (Minneapolis/St. Paul) metro area. This geographical advantage coupled with

ATTACHMENT A

the fact that the county has abundant natural resources with its numerous lakes, streams and forests has a great number of second home owners who recreate here. Being only an hour and half from the metro area many of these home owners have upgraded their seasonal homes into year-round residences and are working here, due to the pandemic.

A good portion of these people own businesses all requiring good internet services. The broadband expansion areas that Farmers Independent Telephone Company is applying for include: an unserved and underserved portion of Union Township. This project is "Green." Telecommuting will help conserve fuel and lessen emissions due to reduced driving.

In addition to this Letter of Support the Burnett County Development Association (BCDA) is willing to partner with Farmers Independent Telephone Company on this project and has agreed to commit \$5,000 to the project pending grant approval. Burnett County is one of the poorer counties in the state and we see an investment in expanded broadband as a key piece of our economic and infrastructure development to grow our economy and personal incomes. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Nate Ehalt,
Burnett County Administrator



Richard F. Hartmann,
Burnett County Economic Development



ATTACHMENT B

President
TIM KUSILEK
President Elect
JUSTIN HUEBNER
Executive Director
BILL ESBECK

March 10, 2022

Chairperson Rebecca Valcq
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower - 6th Floor
Madison, Wisconsin 53705-9100

Chairperson Valcq,

I am pleased to support the FY2022 Broadband Expansion Grant Program (BEGP) applications of Farmers Independent Telephone Company (Farmers) in rural Burnett County.

Since 1907, Farmers has served the homes and businesses in Burnett County. For the last 115 years, the customers of Farmers have enjoyed quality telecommunications service and world class customer service. Like other community-based providers, Farmers has invested in fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) broadband to serve their rural customers. They have continued to expand their FTTH footprint with awards in recent grant cycles. Farmers wants to build upon that success in the FY2022 BEGP cycle.

The proposed Clam River Phase II project will continue the expansion of their fiber network into unserved and underserved areas.

The proposed fiber project will cost a total of \$289,110. Farmers will contribute 55% of the project cost, or \$154,010 after a partnership contribution from Burnett County for \$5,000. The grant request is \$130,099, or 45% of the total project. When the project is complete, 103 new customers will have a fiber-to-the-home connection and options up to 1 Gbps symmetrical broadband.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can assist with additional information.

Regards,

Bill Esbeck



Farmers Independent - Union-Clam Flowage Phase II Application

ATTACHMENT B
ROB STAFSHOLT

STATE SENATOR • 10th SENATE DISTRICT

(608) 266-7745
Toll Free: (800) 862-1092
Sen.Stafsholt@legis.wi.gov

P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

RE: Farmers Independent Telephone Company – Town of Union Broadband Expansion Grant Application
Public Service Commission
610 North Whitney Way, 2nd Floor
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

To: Whom It May Concern,

It is my pleasure to write in support of the Farmers Independent Telephone Company – Town of Union broadband expansion grant application.

As the state senator for the 10th district, I fully understand the need for 100% fiber broadband networks to provide lightning-fast internet to rural, underserved communities. This technology will give underserved individuals in the area high-speed internet. Internet access helps boost local economic development and allows students and families to study and work from home. Faster dependable internet access creates a better landscape for telemedicine and other new technologies for today and into the future. Broadband has shown to be incredibly important, given the digital divide seen during the last two years living through a pandemic.

A well-facilitated broadband expansion will help residents continue to live locally, work, and play while utilizing the most competitive technology. The Farmers Independent Telephone Company – Town of Union project will provide adequate, reliable, and fairly priced broadband that their current providers cannot deliver. I support their plans to expand broadband access to this area and address the need for high-speed internet access in rural communities.

I ask that you seriously consider this application as a true collaboration of local, county, and state all working together to squelch the digital divide in the Town of Union. This area is a great asset to the state of Wisconsin.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Rob Stafsholt
State Senator
District 10